

Is your business 'healthy'?

By Orrin E. Bailey

For Upper Peninsula Business Today

When you think of a business being "healthy", what do you think about? Most of us relate a business' health to the degree of the firm's success. We often think the firm has many customers, strong business and financial management and efficient production of its goods and services.

In this new fast-paced, competitive, global economy we operate in, it can be easy sometimes to forget how "healthy" businesses get that way and how they are able to sustain it.

Ask any CEO, company president or human resource manager and they will tell you that the real success of any company lies within its employees. So, if your employees are your company's most important asset, and it's your responsibility to ensure the longtime success of your company, what is your company doing to ensure that asset is being taken care of properly?

Dozens of scientific research articles have evaluated the cost/benefit of worksite health promotion programs, showing a positive return on investment. For this reason, more companies are collaborating with healthcare providers on their employee health promotion efforts.

The role the healthcare industry plays in supporting the health and wellness of a community, and that of the employees of the businesses that support the econ-

omy of the region is becoming increasingly important.

As businesses work to reduce healthcare costs, the healthcare industry continues to be a significant partner in developing the regional economy of the



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Upper Peninsula. The industry is customizing and aligning its services not only to help contain the cost of healthcare, but to increase the wellness of business.

This is becoming more of a focus of the Upper Peninsula Healthcare Roundtable and its partners.

The Upper Peninsula Healthcare Roundtable is a UP-wide Michigan Regional Skills Alliance consisting of business, healthcare providers, economic and workforce development and others, collaborating together to improve healthcare delivery and to promote U.P. economic and workforce development.

One Upper Peninsula Healthcare Roundtable member, Dickinson County Healthcare System is supporting the Dickinson County Community and its businesses through a menu of services provided by their Dickinson Occupational Clinic.

The Clinic's mission is to provide a broad range of Occupational Medicine,

Health and Wellness Education, and Occupational Safety services and consultation to businesses, organized labor, and governmental agencies.

The Dickinson Occupational Clinic partners with organizations to understand their unique business needs and build a wellness solution that puts their employees first.

Working together with business, wellness clinics help devise custom employee occupational programs that address the importance of good nutrition and regular exercise to help prevent, arrest, and sometimes even reverse diseases.

Wellness programs educate employees on important health issues such as proper weight loss, obesity, and on how adopting and maintaining healthy eating and exercise behaviors can benefit them and their families.

Statistics show that by delivering customized occupational health and wellness solutions, businesses are consistently delivering lower employee

health costs, increasing workforce productivity, lowering disability costs and claims, enjoying fewer lost work days, and are building reputations as employers of choice.

Mitch Merkel, Dickinson Occupational Clinic Director says "through the utilization of our programs, we believe that businesses, organized labor, and governmental agencies will continue to develop a safe and healthy work environment, which will foster an economic, competitive edge for conducting business."

So, if occupational wellness helps your company's most important asset achieve a balance between work and leisure in a way that promotes health and a sense of personal satisfaction, what are you doing to ensure your business is "healthy"?

(Orrin Bailey is chief executive officer for Michigan Works! The Job Force and Six County Employment Alliance.)

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